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857 Min Chia
524 children have quite a large variety of toys, all made locally, for the cheap Japanese toy, or its Shanghai-made competitor, have not yet reached the rural parts of Yunnan. Hobby horses, spinning tops, wooden swords and spears, marbles, dolls, and small wooden toy water mills, are the most elaborate and enduring, for many toys are made of paper for some special occasion, such as the Kwan Yin festival and the New Year. Kites are not regarded strictly as toys, for they are also flown by men as well as by boys. The kite flying season is conventionally limited to the spring, and any one who tried to fly a kite at other seasons would be considered eccentric. This curious idea prevails all over China, but I have never been able to hear a satisfactory explanation. The kite is a Chinese invention, and of great antiquity, often made in the shape of a dragon. It seems possible that it was originally a representation of the Rain Dragon, flown in spring in connection with some rain making rite, and that some faint memory of this inspires the convention which limits kite flying to that season. The fire balloons called K'un Ming lamps, mentioned earlier, which are now regarded as toys, are also only flown at one season for a limited period, and some connection with the Shu Pao ceremony is admitted.

Children also play a number of round games such as hide and seek, touch-last, hop scotch, and one, of Chinese origin, called "breaking the city wall", in which a line of boys hold hands and one other has to charge them and
304 break through, but without using his hands or fists. Except for the last, which is a boys' game, all the others are played by girls and boys together, in the courtyard of their home, for as the Min Chia have never bound the feet of their girls, and the custom is now rapidly disappearing among the Chinese and half Chinese, little girls are quite as active as their brothers. In recent years the introduction of basketball as a school game has led to this becoming the national

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857 ball game of China. It has several advantages for the
524 Chinese, for it can be played on a small piece of ground, which is often all that is available, and it does not require the special boots needed for football, which few Chinese schoolboys could afford. In most parts of China the ground is hard and dry for a large part of the year, and any game such as Rugby Football, or Association, in which the players are likely to fall, or be barged down, is dangerous unless played on a specially softened and prepared ground, and that of course is rarely available. Basket ball, introduced by the schools and also played by soldiers in barracks, is thus the only foreign game known to the Min Chia.

857 When a boy or girl is seven years old schooling begins.
872 Before that, in well-to-do families, the child will have already been taught the elements of writing and have begun to learn to read. During the school years most children live at home, only those who attend the Middle Schools and come from distant villages, boarding at the school. Although elementary education is widespread, only a small proportion of boys, and still fewer girls go on to the
882 Middle School. At thirteen or fourteen school ends for
874 most boys, and they either begin to do full time work on the land, or are apprenticed to a tradesman. The apprentice system is only followed in the city, for in the villages there is no trade but agriculture or lake fishing. The apprentice may be engaged at any age over fourteen years, and is bound to serve his master for four years. In return he must be taught the craft, fed, lodged in the shop, and given a new suit of coat and trousers every New Year's day. He receives no pay during these years, but he shares in the family festivities, and on the occasion of the festival of the God of Wealth, locally known as the Golden Armoured God (Chin Chia Ts'ai Shen), when the merchants picnic near the God's temple outside the west gate, the appren-

Mewu

The women of the tent nomads do not go out to work like the wives of the sedentary Fantzu. Year in and year out their whole time is taken up by caring for the animals. 462

The children are put to work early tending the animals. The girls must, in addition, also gather dung, but the boys do not help in this occupation. The girls start to milk when they are 12 or 13 years old. 857

Animal Husbandry

The Mewu-Fantzu live exclusively from the products of their livestock. They keep yaks, cattle, sheep and horses, also dogs, of course. The most important animal is the yak. The yaks of the Mewu region are generally pure black, occasionally /24/ spotted with white. There are yaks with and without horns. Lack of horns seems to be a recessive hereditary characteristic. There are wealthy families who own more than 100 yaks; but the average number is much less. The 20 tents in the community where I lived together owned 700 yaks, which means an average of 35 per family. The highest number of yaks per family in this community was 70, the lowest 7. It can also happen that poor people do not own any yaks at all, but merely rent them. A family of five needs more than 10 milch cows. 231

Not all families have bulls, but the owner of a bull does not get paid for covering. A cow drops her first calf when she is 2 to 3 years old. The gestation period of the yak is 9 months. Most calves are born in the third or fourth month. In the seventh or eighth month the cows are again covered. Good cows are allowed to grow very old; they are slaughtered only when they are 17 or 18 years old. The calf is gradually weaned, but the amount of milk it gets is reduced very soon after birth. When it is one or two months old the calf gets a nose plug, to prevent it from sucking. The adult yak gets a nose ring made of a bent length of a sturdy withe. Calves and young bulls are often driven to pasture in pairs with their fore-legs tied together, so that they cannot stray too far away.

The oxen are used as pack animals when they are three years old. At the age of 15 or 16 they are fattened and killed. The yaks graze all the year round; only when there is deep snow, which may happen every year in January and February, do they get some green cut oats. The yaks are never given any salt, and therefore always show a definite hunger for it. Milking is done exclusively by the women and girls. The yak cow will let itself be milked only when her calf is tethered near by. A very good milch cow gives a bucket 234